

**Rapid Response Team**  
**February 27 – March 11**

**Issue: Medicaid**

- Just because you may not be on Medicaid doesn't mean its problems won't affect you. You might have to pay more in taxes simply for its unchecked growth.
- For the first time in Mississippi history, Governor Barbour is removing people from Medicaid who are not eligible and working with the Legislature to save money in the long term.
- Despite this good work, there is a short term problem with Medicaid. Because the Governor's PLAD reform (moving 6% of the Mississippi's Medicaid population to federal Medicare) was blocked, the Medicaid program will run out of money on March 11 and will shut down until the end of this fiscal year (June 30).
- Mississippi cannot tax or cut enough in just four months to save Medicaid for our beneficiaries – the math just doesn't work. The state's only option is to invest Health Care Trust Fund dollars into Medicaid.
- Mississippi investing some of its Health Care Trust Fund money into life-saving drugs and treatments for our Medicaid recipients is a good health care expenditure.

- \$20 million from the illegally-formed “Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi” could be turned into \$85 million with the federal match and be used to sustain Medicaid for Mississippi’s poor and sick. The “Partnership’s” anti-tobacco work could continue at less expense through existing state agencies.
- Some are so eager to raise your taxes they are using the Medicaid crisis as an instrument to get at your wallet.
- Raising cigarette taxes – for example -- just gives state government more to waste, it doesn’t even come close to filling the deficit, and, to make matters worse, it singles out our poorest citizens to hit with a tax.
- While revenues to the state went up 34%, state government spending went up 50%. Taxpayers should not be penalized for this irresponsible behavior.
- Instead of raising taxes, Governor Barbour, and all state agencies, should have the authority to save taxpayer money by removing hiring and firing restrictions. State government’s purpose is to deliver services, not simply be an employment agency?
- The Governor is reducing his own budget by 5% to help the state. Why can’t all departments and agencies do this to help fill the deficit?

## **Use the Health Care Trust Fund for Health Care**

At The Governor's urging, the Legislature is finally looking at slowing the exploding growth of Mississippi's Medicaid program.

For the first time in Mississippi history, Governor Barbour is having every Medicaid recipient checked to verify they are eligible for Medicaid. This will make sure only the needy are receiving taxpayer dollars.

Because of unchecked growth and mismanagement during the last administration, the Medicaid program will run out of money on March 11. That means there are poor, sick Mississippians who run the risk of being turned away when they go the pharmacy or the doctor if the Legislature does not act quickly on the Medicaid deficit.

Mississippi cannot tax or cut enough in just four months to save Medicaid for our beneficiaries – the math just doesn't work. Our only option is to invest Health Care Trust Fund dollars into Medicaid.

Here is the choice: we either invest Health Care Trust Fund dollars into Medicaid or poor, sick Mississippians run the risk of being turned away at the pharmacy or the doctor's office on March 12.

Mississippi investing some of its Health Care Trust Fund money into life-saving drugs and treatments for our Medicaid recipients is as good a health care expenditure as I can think of.

Medicaid is a *trust* and Medicaid is *health care* – that makes it a very appropriate use of the "Health Care Trust Fund."

The Governor was right. This desperate situation could have been avoided last year. Governor Barbour tried to save Medicaid by transitioning PLAD recipients to Medicare, but some legislators changed their mind and didn't want reform. Now their only options affect 100% of our Medicaid population and not just 6% of them.

**Advertising or Medicaid? There is Money Available at "The Partnership"**

Here is the question: If you had a \$1 billion state shortfall and you had access to \$20 million in new money and had the choice to spend it on anti-tobacco advertising or on poor children and adults who don't have enough money for the life-saving drugs and treatments they need to live -- regardless of how noble the prevention program may be -- how would YOU spend the money?

Unless something changes, somewhere soon there is going to be a child at home in Mississippi who cannot see a doctor or get medication because Medicaid is broke....but at least he'll be able to see a cute, expensive Partnership ad on his TV.

A Legislative watchdog group, the PEER Committee, called the Partnership 'unconstitutional' and said taxpayer dollars shouldn't go to a private organization without going through our Legislature.

The Partnership does some good work. But \$20 million a year? That \$20 million is almost twice as much as the state spends on fighting drugs and \$7 million more than what the state spends on agriculture! Couldn't anti-tobacco efforts in Mississippi continue for less?

Thanks to the federal government's 3-to-1 match rate, Mississippi could invest the Partnership's \$20 million into our struggling Medicaid program and turn it into more than \$85 million a year. Partnership funds could pay for medication and treatment for 50,000 kids on Medicaid by itself right now.

The Partnership has refused a performance audit by the State Auditor and refused to release their financial statements. What are they hiding?

## **Don't Raise Taxes...Make State Government More Efficient**

While revenues to the state went up 34%, state government spending went up 50%. Why should the taxpayers be penalized for this irresponsible behavior.

Governor Barbour has only had a year to bring efficiencies to state government...give him more time. In addition, give Governor Barbour the authority to make even more savings in state government by removing hiring and firing restrictions. Is state government's purpose to deliver services or be an employment agency?

The Governor is reducing his own budget by 5% to help the state. Why can't all departments and agencies do this to help fill the deficit?

Raising cigarette taxes just gives state government more to waste, it doesn't even come close to filling the deficit, and, to make matters worse, it singles out our poorest citizens to hit with a tax.